



State of the City

February 1, 2010

It is with pleasure and a great deal of personal satisfaction that I give my annual State of the City address to you, the citizens of West Lafayette. Just a year ago, we were confronting unprecedented financial uncertainty locally and nationally. Today, our City enjoys financial stability and an improving quality of life. We are fortunate.

Of all of the critical services we provide, none are as important as outstanding police and fire protection.

The Neighborhood Resource Team was formed in 2009 and began operating in August. The team's responsibilities include animal control, parking control and nuisance and code enforcement. The NRT responded to 761 calls for service and issued 10,091 parking tickets in the four months it operated in 2009.

WLPD worked closely with the Purdue University Police Department on several projects and safety efforts: five new mid-block street crossings; increased foot patrols; and a larger police presence in the city at peak times

In 2009 WLPD continued its proactive approach to alcohol enforcement issues that netted a 35% reduction in alcohol related arrests in 2008 and a further 2% drop in 2009.

WLPD maintained a high visibility and strong enforcement presence in the recently improved designated school zones and in construction zones in 2009. Traffic crashes were down 11% for the year and 19 fewer people were injured in traffic crashes in 2009 over 2008. I thank Chief Jason Dombkowski for all of his efforts and leadership.

Under Chief Drew, the West Lafayette Fire Department has continued with their dedication to excellence. The WLFD now has nearly a year and a half of experience using their Compressed Air Foam Systems and all indications are that equipping the new fire trucks with these was a good decision. Only about fifteen percent of fire trucks nationwide are built with this capability.

Our run numbers were up again this year by 3.0 percent. The West Lafayette Fire Department went from 1120 emergency calls annually in the year 2000 to over 1600 this past year. This 46 percent increase for the decade gives us guidance for anticipating and planning our emergency responses for the next decade.

We must always strive to reduce government bureaucracy and deliver better city services. Good planning reduces property tax increases, enhances essential city services like snow plowing and street sweeping, and offers inexpensive, excellent trash pickup.

Good planning and community cooperation have resulted in some proud achievements in 2009:

- Dow AgriSciences announced they will be establishing a new research facility in the Purdue Research Park bringing 45 new jobs.

- PRF and West Lafayette celebrated the grand opening of the Kurz Purdue Technology Center, the new home of the Purdue Research Foundation and one of the largest university affiliated incubators in the country.

- The Wabash River saw its first new development as part of the Wabash River Corridor revitalization. The Purdue Crew Boathouse held a groundbreaking and construction is currently underway with a completion date of April 2010.

- The City Council approved a land use plan in the New Chauncey neighborhood .

- The City's Strategic Plan is being updated as we speak. Numerous meetings with individuals, groups and the public have truly made this a "community" plan. On-line discussions, the first of their kind in this area, have been held to gain more input.

- West Lafayette is one of three communities to receive the first Cultural District Designation from the Indiana Arts Commission.

Despite the downturn in the world's economic situation, outside investment continues to come to West Lafayette, our relationship with Purdue University has never been stronger and our proactive approach to developing relationships with potential investors bodes well for a bright future. Our Director of Development, Chandler Poole, continues to have a great impact on all development efforts in our City.

The new WL website was successfully launched in early 2009. The website offers services such as on-line payments for traffic tickets and wastewater bills. The website also allows you to report issues experienced throughout the city for such things as trees in need of trimming, missing street signs, potholes or malfunctioning traffic lights. Citizens are able, and encouraged, to sign up to receive the city newsletter electronically on the website. We are now

able to update the website with current information on a daily, even hourly basis so our citizens can stay informed and up to date on what is happening in West Lafayette.

Some of the most visible and important work performed in West Lafayette is done by our public works group consisting of Streets and Sanitation, our Wastewater Utility and the Engineering Department. These three departments make sure your streets are in good repair, your curbs and sidewalks are in good shape, your trash and recycling is picked up and all that is associated with the flow to the Wabash meets the ever toughening IDEM and EPA standards. Additionally, these will be active participants in our Stormwater Utility. This new utility is being developed in response to new mandates from IDEM and the EPA.

The Wastewater Utility, under the leadership of Dave Henderson, saw the completion of the Western Interceptor phase III. Ribbon cutting for the Digester Renovation with Alternate Power Sources Project was held in 2009. It provides the wastewater plant with electricity generated onsite using the biogas from the digesters.

We have begun taking used cooking oil and grease, and Purdue's food wastes to generate more power, the ultimate recycling initiative, turning waste into fuel.

Further kudos to Dave and his staff as the wastewater treatment plant was accepted as an EPA Green Power Partner, the first wastewater plant in Indiana to be invited to join!

Rarely does the term "talking trash" have a positive connotation, however when the focus of the discussion is David Downey, the term turns into a subject worthy of interest. David and his hardworking staff visit our homes to pick up our disposables and recyclables, fill in our potholes on our streets, clean out our sewer system for pollution control and maintain all of our electric traffic signals, street markings and signs.

For 2009, recycling increased over 2008 by 4585 tons and trash decreased by 408 tons, saving the city tipping fees at the landfill, and continually improving our recycling program. Citizens give our trash and recycling program great praise.

Early on in my administration, I was made aware of the need to accelerate our street repair and capital project initiatives. As the economy worsened, and the potential for revenue for the city became somewhat dubious, it became clear to me that we needed to move forward on some of our city street projects and get as much done as quickly as possible. Enter Dave Buck. His "can do, will do" attitude is exactly what is needed in these uncertain times. Dave's knowledge, team building skills and collaborative spirit makes the process of building a road or a bridge seem simple. Property owners affected by projects credit Dave Buck with keeping them at ease, treating them fairly and bringing the projects to a successful conclusion.

2009 has been one of the busiest years in memory. Some milestones of note:

- Wabash Commons and Northpointe provided much needed site clean-ups.
- The preliminary engineering study for building the bridge over the celery bog was completed. This project will not only solve the sinking problem, but will enhance water quality and wildlife habitat by removing a physical barrier that the road embankment currently creates.
- New curbs, sidewalks, ADA ramps and drive approaches throughout the city.
- Salisbury street road construction started in April and was completed in November.
- Cumberland Ave. phase I will completely rebuild Cumberland Avenue from US52 to Yeager. The project will include a new modern roundabout at Kent and Cumberland, new sidewalks and ADA ramps and a 10' trail along the entire north side of the road.
- Safe Routes to School, which involved new school zone beacons and crosswalk signals at Cumberland Elementary School and Happy Hollow, were completed with 100% Federal Grants.
- Sycamore Lane traffic calming measures, new sidewalks and ADA compliant ramps were installed.
- The Robinson Street project installed new curbs, sidewalks, ADA ramps and drive approaches from Salisbury to DeHart.
- Street and sidewalk improvements were made to Russell St, Leslie, Leslie Court, Wiley Drive, Elm, Maywood, Williams, and in the Glenwood Heights neighborhood.
- In September, proposals were received to select an engineering design firm to redesign and repair Happy Hollow Road. In cooperation with INDOT, we are planning ahead for the future on Happy Hollow which will be 80% funded by federal dollars.
- The City received over \$500k in stimulus funding to resurface a portion of Salisbury Street from Robinson to Wiggins.

These are all great projects, all over town.

I think that it is our responsibility to make West Lafayette a healthier place. West Lafayette Parks and Recreation offers many low-cost health and fitness resources. These include sports facilities and family centers that provide year-round recreation opportunities, including walking programs along our trail system, swimming, biking and so much more. In a cooperative effort with the West Lafayette Community School Corporation, a new urban trail will connect the north and south sides of the city and offer excellent outdoor fitness opportunities to our

citizens There is a list published of the healthiest cities in America. I want West Lafayette on that list!

Parks Superintendent Joe Payne and his staff have consistently improved the outdoor and indoor opportunities for the citizen of West Lafayette. In just 2009:

- Morton Center celebrated 80 years as a valued part of the community. A record enrollment of 227 people enjoyed the Wabash Area Lifetime Learning Association classes at the Community Center; hundreds of people enjoyed the annual Morton Spring Dance Recital and the 15th annual Global Fest was enjoyed by the community.

- Thousands of people enjoyed the new Tapawingo Park band shell and other park improvements during the "Taste of Tippecanoe," "Riverfest," "Dancing in the Streets," "Cruise N Concert for Kids," and "Art on the Wabash."

- Swim lessons were enjoyed by more than 1,446 youngsters at the Municipal Pool, and a total of 228 children participated in the summer sports camps.

- At the high school track, a segment of the new Village Fitness trail is underway. Asphalt and concrete work was completed and fencing, lighting, and signing are being completed this winter; a latex track surface and landscaping will be installed in the spring.

- For the 18th time, West Lafayette received national recognition as a Tree City USA. There were 141 new trees planted throughout the city this year.

- More than 7,000 visitors enjoyed Lilly Nature Center.

Our parks continue to lead the way.

Today, at the beginning of 2010, we are living within our means. We have reversed the decline in the General fund, the City's main operating fund. Our cash balance has been restored to a fiscally sound amount. More efficient management and purchasing of services have resulted in significant under expenditure of budgets in such areas as insurance, legal services, and telephone.

When I took office two years ago, the City was spending more than it was taking in, and had depleted the General Fund balance that we depend on to fund basic City services. My chief fiscal goal has been to restore the City's financial stability and with the excellent guidance of Clerk-Treasurer Judy Rhodes, we are succeeding.

We are closing the City's books for 2009 now, and it appears that our spending in 2009 in the General Fund is down nearly 2%. We are continuing to address operational costs and health insurance costs in the 2010 budget, and will continue to put in place additional budgetary controls so that we work within the new circuit breaker limits.

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By providing more online payment options to our utility customers, we got 54% of payments made electronically and have eliminated 6000 bill mailings a year.

We continue to receive clean audits from the State Board of Accounts and I thank the Clerk-Treasurer for her proactive response to changing reporting and auditing standards. I place high importance on ensuring the high professional and ethical standards that I know taxpayers expect are reflected in how this city does business.

The citizens of West Lafayette have a good team in place. Led by the ever present Council President, Ann Hunt, this council is working very hard for our City. My thanks to each of you. I also wish to thank all of our volunteers on our commissions, boards, and committees. Without their sacrifices, we would not have such great success.

I sit here before you tonight as positive about the State of our city as I have ever been. We now have in place the resources and the will to move forward during these difficult financial times. Public safety is now the priority in our city it needs to be. We are going to shape up together in West Lafayette and live longer, better lives! And, we have the right plan to get our fiscal house in order and complete the vision of positive growth. Add to this our mutually beneficial relationship with Purdue University, our economic success stories, our culturally diverse population that has elevated the arts and culture throughout the area, and you have one of this state's most dynamic cities refusing to rest on its laurels and eager to move forward into the new decade.

I look forward to the year ahead.

John R. Dennis, Mayor
City of West Lafayette